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SCIENCE :

A WEEKLY RECORD OF SCIENTIFIC
PROGRESS.

JOHN MICHELS, Editor.

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 28, 1880.

THE annual session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science has been most brilliantly opened in Boston. The intellectual force now concentrated there will soon be flowing through all the channels of knowledge. Our columns next week will contain our reporter's account of the proceedings, and will be enriched by an address, in full, of the distinguished retiring President, Professor George F. Barker, whose learning and devotion to Science alone placed him in that elevated position. We have also obtained valuable and interesting papers by Professors Agassiz, Hall of Washington, and other distinguished participants, which will duly appear.

MR. PAGET HIGGS, the well-known English electrical engineer, now in Boston, has given his opinion, through the *New York Herald* (August 27), on the durability of electric motors and their actual return in work. As the general introduction of Edison's electro-dynamo-machine is being anxiously looked for wherever a constant supply of cheap power is necessary, it becomes of the first importance to consumers to know how long the new engines will last. Mr. Higgs' positive statement of their length of life will no doubt confirm many small manufacturers in New York in their intention to profit by this convenient source of power, which, rumor says, will soon be generally placed at their disposal. Mr. Higgs has run some of the older and less perfect electro-motors since 1867, and finds them to-day in perfect condition. As the fruit of his own experiment and observation of the work of the most experienced European electricians, Mr. Higgs emphatically denies that there is any extraordinary loss in using them to communicate power at a distance.

WE drew attention to an educational scheme which has been recently inaugurated at the Paris Observatory for the purpose of training young astronomers. It may be interesting in this connection to know that Professor Stone, of the Cincinnati Observatory, has for a number of years been quietly but successfully pursuing a plan in almost every respect identical with that more recently inaugurated in Paris. A small number of selected graduates are admitted as students at the Observatory, pursue a systematic course of study in theoretical and practical Astronomy, and upon its successful completion receive a post-graduate degree from the authorities of the University.

The course of study carried on at the Paris Observatory is described in *SCIENCE*, August 14th. If there are other Observatories in the United States offering the same facilities as those initiated by Professor Stone, we shall be glad to hear from those who can give authentic information.

WE are not surprised that universal regret is expressed at the loss by the New York Fishery Commission of their annual appropriation. It appears to be acknowledged that the Commission was doing good work, and we trust their present difficulties are but temporary, and will be removed when the matter can be considered by the Legislature.

We think the Commissioners would strengthen their hands in efforts to obtain a renewal of their appropriation, if they gave some attention to the coarser kinds of fish, the supply of which appears to be practically unlimited at our very doors, and yet for unaccountable reasons is retailed at exorbitant prices, even averaging that of meat.

Fish is a natural food product for the poor of cities situated on the coast, but the dealers combine to make it an expensive luxury, by limiting the supply. We are even told that they destroy it, rather than effect sales below the prices they have arbitrarily fixed.

There appears to be little encouragement for the Legislature to grant appropriations to increase the supply of fish and lower its price, if the dealers in combination have finally the power to limit the supply and to create an artificial value.

As one of the New York Fishery Commissioners is himself one of those who are most largely interested in the sale of fish, his knowledge on the subject must be considerable, and he would certainly promote the interest of the Commission by assisting to remove the evil of which we complain. While it may be a good work to load the table of the epicure with choice fish, it should be more satisfactory to restore to the poorer classes an article of food which nature has supplied with such a bountiful hand.